

## Question Types and Questioning Tactics Used by *Bright English* Teacher during English Online Class

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### ABSTRACT

This study was conducted to determine what question types and questioning tactics the *Bright English* language teacher used in English online classes. In this study, the writers used Wragg and Brown's (2001) theory of three question types and seven questioning tactics to analyze the data. This study was done using a qualitative approach. The findings showed that the teacher asked conceptual and empirical questions to students in online meetings. When asking questions, the teacher employed five questioning tactics: pausing and pacing, directing and distributing, listening to replies and responding, prompting and probing, and sequencing questions. In conclusion, the teacher's question types and questioning tactics were affected by the lesson's topic and the class situation. For further research, the writers suggested that two or more learning groups with students from different grades could be analyzed in onsite and online learning environments.

**Keywords:** online learning; question types; questioning tactics; English class

### INTRODUCTION

Communication between the teacher and pupils in the classroom is a type of interaction that occurs during teaching-learning activities. For example, such interaction happens when the teachers deliver different aspects of language to the learners, when the teachers and students exchange cross-linguistic and cross-cultural communication, and when educational theory and practice interact in the classroom (Jenks & Seedhouse, 2015). Ma (2008) adds that raising questions effectively is a crucial strategy for teachers who want to encourage their students to think critically while also developing their ability to analyze and create. It is also a vital means for teachers to provide knowledge and receive advice, and a vital conduit for the teachers and pupils to exchange ideas. As a result, teachers in the classroom must give special attention to their ability to ask questions. Teachers use several types of questions depending on the function and aim of the question.

In this present study, the writers focus on the questions types and questioning tactics used by English language teachers of *Bright English* course. *Bright English* was established in 2007 and is located in Ruko Taman Gapura E 18, Surabaya, Indonesia. It focuses on teaching Academic English to students ranging from playgroup to university level. Currently, it has four active teachers and 40 students (D. Sura, personal communication, March 9, 2022).

The writers observe the seventh graders' group class in this study because children are typically more lively and enthusiastic as learners. Moreover, they care more about impressing the teacher than entertaining their classmates. They are also active in the class activity even if they do not comprehend why or how as they do not have the same access to meta-language as higher grade students (Cameron, 2001).

The teacher's questions analysed in this study are from the two audio recordings of the Zoom online class meetings because since March 16, 2020, Indonesian schools have

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implemented online learning because of the covid-19 outbreak (Harnani, 2020). Zoom is the official video meeting platform Bright English uses as the medium for online learning. Therefore, the writers choose to observe the Zoom meetings. In addition, the writers are personally interested in observing teacher's questions in online learning because online learning has an entirely different learning method and environment than on-site learning (Rachmah, 2020).

For this study, the writers use the theory from Wragg and Brown (2001). They classify three types of teachers' questions based on the content of questions relating to learning a specific subject: conceptual, empirical, and value. The goal of asking the correct type of questions for the teachers is to inspire students to take a more active role in their learning. Furthermore, using the right tactic in asking questions to students is crucial to get the students' expected responses and minimize the mistakes. There are seven questioning tactics presented by Wragg and Brown (2001): sequencing, pitching and putting questions clearly, directing and distributing questions, pausing and pacing, prompting and probing, listening to replies and responding, and sequencing questions.

## **METHODS**

The writers used a qualitative approach for this study. The data source in this research was all teacher and students' interactions in the two *Zoom* meetings on March 4 and 11, 2022 that each meeting lasted for 60 minutes. The data consisted of the teacher's questions related to grammar in the meeting. The writers omitted all the teacher's questions unrelated to grammar.

The writers observed the seventh grader group class consisted of six students, one male and five females, from the same school. The teacher only taught grammar in this class. The learning material of the first meeting was grammar related to mixed tenses, passive voice, and relative pronouns. Meanwhile, the learning material of the second meeting was grammar related to mixed tenses, passive voice, relative pronouns, and comparative adjectives. The grammar worksheets, used in the meetings, were self-prepared by the teacher according to the learning materials in the students' school.

The language teacher that the writers observed was a female teacher. She graduated from Widya Mandala Catholic University, Surabaya, Indonesia, with a Bachelor of Education degree. Furthermore, she has been teaching English for 23 years in formal and informal educational institutions. She teaches students from playgroup to university level.

The writers applied several steps in collecting data for this research. First, the writers found out some information about the teacher, the class schedule, and the course. Second, the writers met the teacher in the course and asked permission to observe and record the two online class meetings on March 4 and 11, 2022. After getting the permission, the writers joined the online class meeting following the schedule. The writers used an audio recorder to record the teaching-learning process in the online meetings. After collecting the data, the writers made transcripts for the two online class meetings. After making transcripts, the writers marked all the teacher's questions related to the lesson one by one. To make the data clearer, the writers used a two-digit numbering system in the transcript for the questions. The first digit indicates the meeting order: number 1 (one) is the first meeting, number 2 (two) is the second meeting, etc. The second digit is the number of the teacher's questions in one meeting. For instance, the number 2.8 means the data is taken from the teacher's questions in the second meeting, and it is the eighth question of the teacher in the meeting.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In this chapter, the writers present the findings and discussion of questions types and questioning tactics used by *Bright English* teachers during English online classes.

### Questions Types Used by *Bright English* Language Teacher during English Online Classes

From the analysis, the writers found out that among three question types presented by Wragg and Brown (2001), the language teacher of *Bright English* only used two question types: conceptual and empirical. The teacher did not employ value questions in the meetings. Value questions are questions that look at relative worth and merit and evoke people's perceptions or beliefs on a certain topic (Wragg & Brown, 2001). They were not employed by the teacher because all of the teacher's questions were about English grammar whose concepts cannot be perceived subjectively (Mart, 2013).

#### Conceptual Question

Questions regarding the subject being studied that elicit concepts, definitions, and reasoning are known as conceptual questions (Wragg & Brown, 2001). This question is intended to assist students in grasping the concept of the subject under study. The teacher asked this type of question in the online meetings to help students understand or recall the critical concept of English grammar.

##### Excerpt 1

T: Yeah, Jojo and Gabi... Ok, nah since you haven't any materials yeah, so please do this one, I have three students, yeah. So please do number 1 until number 2, this is for Elaine. And then number 3 and 4 Abel. Yeah. Ok.. and then 5 and 6 is for Mady. Ok. Please do this one. Pay attention to the time signal. Once again, if you see for and since, Hello, hello, review on time signal, yeah. **(1.1) For and since, what is it for...?** Since, for, and then ever, just.

S: Present Perfect?

T: Yeah Perfect, yeah.. perfect. Since for perfect.

In this excerpt, the teacher asked this question before the students proceeded with the worksheet. When the teacher asked the students what the time signals 'for' and 'since' for, the students started to think about the meaning or the concept and the use of time signals 'for' and 'since' in perfect tenses. The question 1.1 "**For and since, what is it for...?**" was posed by the teacher to help students understand the use of such time signals in perfect tenses.

#### Empirical Question

Empirical questions need observation, knowledge recall, and experimentation (Wragg & Brown, 2001). They are made to let students observe, speculate, and connect one truth and another. Since the students were doing grammar worksheets during online meetings, the teacher employed empirical questions to help students observe the question in the worksheets, recall the related knowledge, and make connections between the knowledge and the questions in the worksheets.

##### Excerpt 2

T: Mady, be careful with number 8, Mady. 'We didn't go outside yesterday,' yeah. The 'didn't go' is correct, yeah. **(2.20) And then, how about the 'rain'?** If you use the present perfect continuous, it means that the rain is now. **(2.21) But here we talk about yesterday, so what**

**should you use...?** Eh, Gabi? Gabi, this one is correct, yeah, you use simple past, right? (2.22) **So this is a story about Marty who smoked and the mother came..., so?** (2.23) **Is it correct if you use simple pre, eh sorry, present continuous and simple past...?** Hi Jojo.

In this excerpt, the teacher checked students' answers on the worksheet. The teacher noticed some errors in Mady's and Gabi's answers and asked questions based on the question in the worksheet. Mady answered 'didn't go' correctly in the first part, but she misused the present perfect continuous in the second part, which she was supposed to answer using past perfect continuous. Therefore, the teacher asked question 2.20 "**And then, how about the 'rain'?**" to help Mady observe and make connections between the second part of the question of the worksheet and her answer. The teacher asked question 2.21 "**But here we talk about yesterday, so what should you use...?**" to help Mady recall what tense to use if there is time signal 'yesterday' and make connections between the tense and the question on the worksheet. In addition, Gabi misused present continuous in her answer, which she was to answer using past continuous, so the teacher asked question 2.22 "**So this is a story about Marty who smoked and the mother came..., so?**" and question 2.23 "**Is it correct if you use simple pre, eh sorry, present continuous and simple past...?**" to Gabi to help her observe and make connections between the question of the worksheet and her answer.

### Questioning Tactics Used by *Bright English* Language Teacher during English Online Classes

From the observation, among seven questioning tactics presented by Wragg and Brown (2001), the language teacher from *Bright English* employed pausing and pacing most frequently, followed by directing and distributing, sequencing, listening to replies and responding, and prompting and probing. The teacher did not use structuring due to the lack of students' responses during the passive online class. The teacher also did not use pitching because she had 23 years of experience teaching young learners, so she knew proper vocabulary to use.

#### Pausing and Pacing

Briefly pausing after a question and after an answer encourages more students to respond, gives them more time to make longer comments, and increases the number of students who ask questions (Tobin, 1987, as cited in Wragg & Brown, 2001). Teachers who pause frequently are more likely to ask a variety of questions at varying speeds. The pace is indicated by pauses. For more complex questions, longer pauses are required. During the online meeting, the teacher often paused for 5 seconds or more after the questions to give students more time to think before answering her questions.

#### Excerpt 3

T: (1.28) **Come on, number 8, Gabi, the time signal 'for' and 'since', yeah, are for...?**

(1.29) Present perfect or present perfect continuous?

S: Yes.

T: (1.30) **Yes yang mana (which one), which one...?**

S: Present perfect.

T: No

S: Continuous sorry.

In this excerpt, the teacher was checking the student's answer on the worksheet presented by herself. The teacher found some mistakes in the answer, so the teacher asked questions related to the question in the worksheet. When asking question 1.28 "**Come on, number 8, Gabi, the time signals 'for' and 'since', yeah, are for...?**", the teacher paused for

5 seconds, indicated by (...). When asking question 1.30 “**Yes yang mana (which one), which one...?**”, the teacher silenced for 7 seconds (...). The pauses were given to give students more time to think before answering.

### Directing and Distributing

Direct questions by name, gesture, head movement, or facial expressions is crucial because undirected questions frequently elicit a chorus of responses and a loss of control. Distributing questions throughout the class, on the other hand, has the potential to engage more students while lowering the risk of students losing focus and control (Wragg & Brown, 2001). During online meetings, the teacher often called students’ names after or before the questions and distributed her questions throughout the class to avoid losing focus and control.

#### Excerpt 4

T: Come on.... **(1.40) Gabi, what is the past form of ‘build’, Is it ‘built’?**

S: Actually I forgot.

T: Eh... ‘build’ the past form is very easy, you just change the -d into -t.... **(1.41) Yes, Elaine, what happen with your ‘shining’?** Ok, 14 to 16 correct.... ‘It was a wonderful morning, the sun was shining when I got up’, yeah, ok, and then ‘they built...’ and ‘since then...’ Gabi, should be ‘has never been renovated until today’, yeah..., Gabi? Gabi...?

In this example, the teacher was checking the students’ answers on the worksheet presented by the teacher in the online meeting. The students were assigned to answer the questions on the worksheet. The teacher found some mistakes made by the students, so the teacher asked questions 1.40 “**Gabi, what is the past form of ‘build’, Is it ‘built’?**” and 1.41 “**Yes, Elaine, what happen with your ‘shining’?**” by directing or calling the students’ names, Gabi and Elaine, to revise their answers. The teacher also distributed the questions to Elaine to engage Elaine and avoid losing focus of other students.

### Prompting and Probing

Prompting and probing questions are employed as follow-up questions when the students’ responses are insufficient or incorrect. Prompts provide students with cues to help them recall prior knowledge, whereas probes need more detailed or comprehensive responses (Wragg & Brown, 2001). Among the three kinds of prompts, only the first kind (rephrasing the question to be more direct and possibly more relevant to the student's knowledge and experience) was used by the teacher after the insufficient or incorrect students’ answers. The teacher did not use probes throughout the meetings because the teacher demanded short answers rather than detailed and more complete elaborations from the students’ responses.

#### Excerpt 5

T: ‘Since, for’.... **(2.37) ‘Since, for,’ they are the time signals for...?**

S: *Itu* (that one) em, present perfect atau (or) past perfect *ya?* Past perfect.

T: **(2.38) Present perfect or present perfect continuous?**

S: Present continuous.

In this excerpt, the teacher was checking the student’s answer on the worksheet presented herself. The teacher found some mistakes in Abelle’s answer, so the teacher asked questions based on the question in the worksheet. The teacher asked question 2.37 “**‘Since, for,’ they are the time signals for...?**” to help Abelle observe the time signal ‘for’ used in the question on the worksheet. However, Abelle answered “past perfect” which she was supposed to

answer present perfect continuous tense. Therefore, the teacher applied the first kind of prompting by rephrasing question 2.37 to question 2.38 “**Present perfect or present perfect continuous?**” which is a more direct one. It is more direct because unlike question 2.37 which asked what tenses use time signals ‘since’ and ‘for’, the teacher directly stated two choices of tenses in question 2.38 which is more relevant to the student’s knowledge and experience.

### **Listening to Replies and Responding**

Among the four kinds of listening presented by Wragg and Brown (2001), only search listening was used by the teacher. The teacher applied search listening because she expected specific information from the students’ responses to her questions. Effective responses require providing students with reinforcement and feedback, which is why they are so important. It’s also tied to getting people’s attention and building passion (Wragg & Brown, 2001).

#### Excerpt 6

T: yeah. Ok, past participle ya. Now the problem is for the ‘be’. ‘be’ is different from, eh, for each tense that we have here. (1.45) Ok, if the sentence is present, what are the ‘be’...? (1.46) *Kalau present berarti pakai apa...?* (if it is present tense, what should we use?) Bel, Mady, Jojo, Gabi, come on come on, *ayo*, hurry up.... (1.47) **‘Be’ nya present apa...?** (What is the ‘be’ for present tense?) **Bel? Abelle...? (1.48) Ya apa** (What is it), **Mady?**

S: ‘is’

T: (1.49) **‘is’...?**

S: ‘is, am, are’

In this excerpt, the teacher was reviewing the pattern of passive voice, specifically on the ‘be’ for each tense. The teacher asked question 1.47 “**‘Be’ nya present apa...?** (What is the ‘be’ for present tense?)” to Abel by calling her name to help Abelle recall the concepts of passive voice. The teacher also asked the same question to Mady, as stated in question 1.48 “**What is it, Mady?**”. The teacher applied search listening because she expected specific information (is, am, are) from the students’ responses. Mady responded to the teacher’s question by saying “is”, which is insufficient for the teacher’s expected answer (part of the answer echoed). Therefore, the teacher replied by accepting the answer, converting Mady’s answer into a question, and asking back.

### **Sequencing Questions**

There are seven types of sequencing questions according to Wragg and Brown (2001): extending and lifting (gradually increase the level of questions), circular path (a sequence of questions leading back to the initial question), same path (same level of question), narrow to broad (specific to more general), broad to narrow (general to more specific), backbone of questions with relevant digressions (questions related to topic), and random walk (random questions). From the observation, the teacher only used two types of sequencing questions during the meeting namely the same path and broad to narrow path. The following is an example of a broad to narrow path.

#### Excerpt 7

T: Ok... number 7 ‘I have never felt’ ok correct, and then ‘I will stay’, ‘I hope it will stay.’ ‘We didn’t go because it... , it had been raining’ *harusnya itu*. ‘It was raining’, ‘it had been raining the whole day, maybe we will go.’ (2.26) ‘While mom was working in the garden’ yeah, ‘she hurt’ and then...? (2.27) And then *apa...* (what)? ‘She went to the doctor who told her that she

would', yeah, 'that she would have' the rest, to rest, sorry.... Jo? Please correct number 9. 'My sister has been working hard...' 'than I was expecting...' Hello? Gabi? Number 12, 'nobody was in the car' yeah. **(2.28) Can you imagine the situation, Gab? (2.29) 'Nobody was in the car,' is it present or past, Gabi...?**

S: it's present? Past past.

In this excerpt, the teacher was checking the students' answers on the worksheet presented herself. The teacher found some mistakes in Gabi's answers, so the teacher asked questions based on the questions on the worksheet. The teacher asked Gabi a series of questions, question 2.28 "**Can you imagine the situation, Gab?**" and question 2.29 "**'Nobody was in the car,' is it present or past, Gabi...?**", to help Gabi observe the question on the worksheet. These two questions used the broad to narrow path of sequencing because question 2.28 asked about the situation of the question in the worksheet, whereas question 2.29 asked about what tense to use under the situation, which is more specific.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the writers discovered that the language teacher of *Bright English* employed two of the three question types described by Wragg and Brown (2001): conceptual and empirical. The teacher did not employ value questions throughout the two online meetings because all of the teacher's questions were about English grammar whose concepts cannot be perceived subjectively. From this study, the writers concluded that the teacher tends to ask questions that recall students' prior knowledge and check their understanding in reviewing grammar.

Among the seven questioning tactics by Wragg and Brown (2001), the teacher used pausing and pacing, directing and distributing, sequencing, listening to replies and responding, and prompting and probing. The teacher did not use structuring due to the lack of students' responses during the passive online class. The teacher also did not use pitching because she had 23 years of experience teaching young learners, so she knew what proper vocabulary to use. From this study, the writers concluded that the teacher tends to ask questions that recall students' prior knowledge and check their understanding in reviewing grammar.

In conclusion, the teacher's question types and questioning tactics were affected by the lesson's topic and the class situation. The writers also found out that the teacher might get fewer students' responses in online learning because of distractions or internet connection problems. In addition, during online learning, the teacher needs to make sure the students follow the topic's discussion by calling their names or asking questions because the teacher does not know whether the students pay attention during online meetings if they turn off their cameras or mute their microphones. Since this study only involved one teacher teaching a group of six seventh graders in two online meetings on a small scale, the writers suggested that further research could involve two or more learning groups with students from different grades in onsite and online learning environments. The writers hope this study will contribute to similar research on question types and questioning tactics.

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